



WYOMING PLANT MATERIALS TECH NOTE 7

Review of CRP Native Grass, Forb, and Shrub Establishment

**THIS INFORMATION ORIGINATED FROM MONTANA NRCS – WYOMING ADDITIONS
APPEAR IN ITALICS.**

Introduction: Twenty two (22) CP-2, CP-10, CP-15, CP-25 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) plantings, consisting of native grasses (warm & cool season), forbs, legumes and shrubs, were evaluated on 15 producers in six eastern Montana counties June 4 - 7, 2001. The purpose of the review was to ascertain whether current Technical Guide recommendations are valid when establishing diverse native plant communities.

The following is a synopsis of those observations and recommendations.

CRITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Winterfat and fourwinged saltbush can be successfully established from seed within grass and forb mixtures, **all other woody species must be seeded in separate rows.**
- Enhancement within existing crested wheatgrass stands requires burning or haying, multiple non-selective herbicide applications AND tillage, to germinate accumulated seed banks for crested wheatgrass control, provide for residue reduction for good seed/soil contact and maximize soil moisture storage.
- Alfalfa is competitive with warm and cool season grasses at the .5 pls lbs./acre rate. It should be established in alternate rows or diluted in mixture to .1 pls lbs./acre. *However, at low rates it might not comprise enough of the mix to be considered a separate species in the mixture (for EBI points).*
- Sainfoin is an excellent alternative to alfalfa because it is less competitive and more compatible with slow establishing native species than alfalfa.
- Side-oats grama and switchgrass can be successfully established in mixtures with cool season grasses. Bluestems require an alternate row culture for successful establishment and persistence.

NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS:

- Currant, rose, chokecherry, snowberry was volunteering on some sites.
- Cheatgrass and wild oat infestations result in poor stands. They need to be controlled during site preparation and the CRP mixture should be spring planted following a non-selective herbicide application. *Experiences in the Torrington and Wheatland Field Offices have shown that moldboard plowing plus cultipacking will bury the weed seed, prepare a firm seedbed and provide for excellent seedling establishment.*

- CRP plantings should be delayed after a small grain crop to store two feet of soil moisture for successful weed control and stand establishment.
- Cereal grain chaff windrows should be spread to eliminate toxicity, reduce volunteer grain competition and provide for good seed - soil contact.
- No Wood's rose plants were germinated or establishing from seed. Rose requires a 1-2 year cool-warm-cool stratification prior to germination.
- Broadleaf summer annual weeds in new seedings have little impact on stand establishment. However, weeds should be clipped or shredded to prevent re-seeding or nuisance to neighbors.
- Optimum Lewis flax rate is .05 pls lbs./acre.
- Haying and intensive grazing (*if allowed under program constraints*) of **well-established** CRP stands improves plant vigor and health.
- Noxious weeds need to be controlled prior to planting and within established stands.
- Woody seedling transplant locations should be documented on plan map for future reference.

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